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ABSTRACT

A study tested the applicability of gratifications research to magazines. Telephone surveys with 543 adults in a large western urban area ascertained their media usages and their agreement with 14 gratifications statements drawn from morphostatic research into the surveillance-diversion-personal identity triad in relation to newspaper and radio. Analyses determined if the expected three dimensions were present for magazines, and if expectancies regarding magazines could be related to magazine readership. Diversion was found to be a common response across media, while surveillance and interaction depended upon the medium under consideration. To evaluate these insights and to test magazines' potential for morphogenetic approaches, magazine readership behaviors were examined. Results indicated that magazines, even newsmagazines, were measurably different from newspapers in terms of media gratifications. The pattern for general circulation magazines was also different from that of newspapers and newsmagazines. Findings indicated that all three gratifications research perspectives had been partly correct. Morphostatic research, cross-media comparisons, and morphogenetic approaches were all supported. (HTH)

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Adult Readership of Magazines and Why They Read

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Adult Readership of Magazines and Why They Read

Magazine readership produces diversion orientations similar to other mass media, but produces its own unique patterns of surveillance and interaction with media.

During the decade following the 1974 benchmark year for uses and gratifications research (16,20), two consistent research themes have emerged from that literature, one morphostatic, stressing consistencies within gratifications; the other morphogenetic, emphasizing discrepancies among gratifications (4). The morphostatic approach has dealt largely with the specification of media-related gratifications at any given time, while the morphogenetic approach has stressed the dynamics of gratification formation and their relation to media behaviors.

Initially, morphostatic research involved specifying typologies related to audience perceptions of media (16,20). Eventually, these typologies were articulated as including at least three dimensions: surveillance of the surrounding world; diversion from it; and, personal identity, an interaction of personal and mediated experiences (1).

Despite the initial articulation of these three dimensions in terms of newspapers and television, results of research involving those media have produced mixed support for the three dimensions. Newspaper research has produced dimensions that were clearly surveillance, less clearly diversion, and somewhat similar to personal identity, but

sufficiently different to be called interaction (28) or stimulation (8,9). A similar pattern has been produced for television research (16,20), with clear support for surveillance, greater ambiguity for diversion, and again, even less support for personal guidance (21,24,25).

At best, morphostatic research has reinforced the notion of surveillance, identified a need for more effective articulation of diversion, and located a murky third dimension involving the interaction of the individual's life and media experiences.

Dissatisfied with the limitations of morphostatic approaches, gratifications researchers evolved a morphogenetic approach. As initially conceived, this latter approach explored the dynamics of individual-media interaction through discrepancies between gratifications sought (GS) and obtained (GO) from media (18,19).

Although research in this area has tended to stress television (22,31), viewing by persons under 25 years of age (15), and television news (32), conclusions have pointed toward generalized expectancies or beliefs regarding television (10,13,17). Articulating these expectancies has been cumbersome, however, because of audience tendencies to view out of habit (33); to simply attend to the medium itself (22); and, to make selections based on affective state rather than formal, stable criteria (34).

Because of these difficulties, the focus of morphogenetic research has expanded toward articulating media expectancies, especially in terms of specialized and minority media (2).

The prognosis for success in this area, however, also is mixed. Morphostatic studies of gratifications related to specialized media, although limited in number, have produced a variety of results. When the medium of radio was examined, diversion emerged clearly, but individual-media interaction was subsumed under the concept of surveillance (27). Studying Music Television (MTV), a hybrid of radio music and television visuals, produced complex groupings of information/social learning, passing time, escape/mood, and social interaction (26). Indeed, optimistic notes have emerged mainly from U.S. minority media, which related to developing ethnic identity (6); and, the Swedish partisan press, which related to strengthening personal political preferences (29,30).

The crux of this diversity appeared to be the need to study a medium that was sufficiently generalized to serve as a mass medium; sufficiently compelling to avoid undifferentiated exposure; and, sufficiently personal to avoid generic response. Electronic media seemed an unlikely avenue: television had raised the problems; and radio, though personal, was too undifferentiated in exposure. Newspaper was compelling since it required the specific

response of subscribing or buying, but it was not sufficiently personal. Minority media were personal, but not sufficiently generalized; and, the partisan press was simply too scarce in the United States. Only the relatively unexplored area of magazine offered potential. Magazines are mass media, produced largely in media centers; compelling because they require subscribing or buying; and, personal because they feature relatively specialized content targeted to particular buying groups (3).

What was known about the relations between media gratifications and magazines had emerged from morphostatic studies comparing several media. Drawing on the concept that media gratifications can be met by either one medium or by similarities among several media (7), these studies have stressed gratifications that transcend individual media (12), but have found individualistic relations as well. Magazines have been related to surveillance notions like following international events (5), keeping up with government, and information about daily life; as well as diversion notions like killing time and simple escape (11).

To test the applicability of gratifications research to magazine, a random digit dialing (RDD) sample of 543 adults in a large Western urban area was interviewed regarding media usage and their agreement with 14 gratifications statements on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree (coded as 5) to strongly disagree (coded as

1). The 14 statements were drawn from morphostatic research into the surveillance-diversion-personal identity triad in relation to newspaper (28) and radio (27). Since both studies had produced different structural results, using the same statements would replicate the original studies as well as control for cross-media similarities and differences.

Analysis consisted of two parts. First, following a morphostatic approach, a principal components, varimax rotated factor analysis was used to determine if the expected three dimensions were present for magazine. Second, following the morphogenetic approach, stepwise discriminant analyses were conducted to determine if expectancies regarding magazines could be related to magazine readership.

As Table 1 indicates, the factor analysis identified the anticipated dimensions of diversion and surveillance, as well as a third interaction dimension. Of the three dimensions, diversion was the most stable across media. The first four diversion statements in Table 1 also had loaded on diversion for both newspaper (28) and radio (27). This finding indicated that diversion was a clearly identifiable concept that crossed all three media.

Less stability was found for the other two dimensions. Surveillance and interaction had simply combined for radio (27); and, in Table 1, they split and recombined for magazine. Table 1's first magazine grouping lead with two

newspaper interaction statements, but finished with two newspaper surveillance statements. Similarly, the third magazine factor lead with two newspaper surveillance statements, but added diversion and interaction statements to round out the grouping.

In combination, these findings meant that diversion was a concept relatively consistent across media, a finding congenial to the cross-media research perspective. On the other hand, the instability of surveillance and interaction dimensions across media meant that the two concepts had particular meanings for particular media, supporting the morphostatic single medium approach. Diversion was a common response across media, while surveillance and interaction depended upon the medium under consideration.

To evaluate these insights and to test magazine's potential for morphogenetic approaches, magazine readership behaviors were examined using discriminant analysis and the same 14 gratification statements. This analysis was conducted in two phases. First, as a precaution that surveillance and interaction were not part of a larger concept like news/information, readership of only newsmagazines (Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report) was analyzed. If relations similar to newspaper emerged, then a generalized news orientation for print media would be appropriate. If differences occurred, then particularistic relations for the magazine medium itself

would be plausible. Second, the discriminant analysis was repeated for reading general circulation magazines (ranging from Popular Mechanics to Playgirl). Differences in the second analysis would affirm magazine's difference from other media in terms of media gratifications.

Table 2 shows the discriminant analysis that emerged relative to reading newsmagazines. Since unweighted discriminant functions are often difficult to interpret, the table presents the canonical correlation coefficients of those weights. Like Pearson correlation coefficients, the canonical correlation coefficients range more or less from plus to minus one with zero as a midpoint (27,28). The plusses and minuses simply indicate which independent and dependent variables were related statistically to each other. Additionally, group means have been provided to further facilitate interpretation.

The resultant pattern in Table 2 was clearly different from both weekday and Sunday newspaper readership (28), supporting the notion that magazines, even newsmagazines, were measurably different from newspapers in terms of media gratifications. Specifically, newsmagazine subscribers were oriented toward surveillance for big news events and the interaction of passing information along, while single copy buyers stressed the surveillance of more information on particular and exciting events. Non-readers oriented toward

diversion, although they could be attracted by happenings of local import.

Further, Table 3 shows that the pattern related to general circulation magazines was clearly different from newsmagazines and newspapers. Specifically, consumer magazine subscribers reflected the diversions of lifestyle quality and passing time, along with the interactions of finding and understanding issues. Single copy buyers stressed interactions with others and advertisements, while non-readers clung to surveillance and avoided the diversion of mediated companionship. These findings reaffirmed magazine's distinctiveness and asserted the importance of broad content themes in differentiating among magazine readers.

Perhaps ironically, these findings indicated that all three gratifications research perspectives had been partly correct. Morphostatic researchers who stressed a single medium were supported in terms of surveillance and the ever elusive interaction concept, both of which changed as the medium under consideration changed. Cross-media comparisons were supported in the sense that diversion crossed several media, varying in degree rather than in composition. Additionally, morphogenetic approaches were supported in that differentiations in media behaviors like subscribing and single copy buying could be identified by varying media-related gratifications. The assertions supported most

clearly were that uses and gratifications research is multitheoretical, not atheoretical (14); and, that the triad of surveillance-diversion-personal identity requires additional refinement, both within and across media.

Finally, the study's results supported the notion that the magazine medium was appropriately generalized, compelling, and personal to produce meaningful research insights. This success provided grounds for optimism regarding the study of magazine, especially in terms of its broad formats like erotica, hobbies, and housewifery. Such research would likely promote greater understanding of the murky area of interaction between the individual and mediated experience, and further refine insights regarding surveillance and diversion through the mass media.

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Table 1: Motivation factors for adults' exposure to magazines

Factor/variance explained	Factor loading	Mean
<u>Magazine interaction</u> (33%)		
Get information to pass on to other people (I)	.74	3.62
Find interesting or unusual stories that I can tell to others (I)	.59	3.73
Understand what is going on (S)	.50	3.48
Find issues affecting people like myself (S)	.50	3.56
<u>Magazine diversion</u> (12%)		
By being my friend when I am alone (D)	.63	3.09
Be happy (D)	.59	3.16
Just pass the time (D)	.59	3.66
Be entertained (D)	.51	3.80
Find products through advertisements (I)	.39	3.38
Improve the quality of my lifestyle (D)	.36	3.33
<u>Magazine surveillance</u> (8%)		
Get immediate knowledge of big news events (S)	.68	2.69
Keep me informed about what is happening in my local community (S)	.60	2.61
Get exciting, dramatic and entertaining news (D)	.50	3.16
Get more information on things I have seen such as movies, sports events or accidents (I)	.44	3.10

KEY: Newspaper motivations from (28):

(S) = Surveillance; (D) = Diversion; (I) = Interaction.

Note: Means range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2: Means of discriminants for newsmagazine readership

	Subscribers (-.44)	Single-Copy Readers (-.77)	Non- readers (.20)	(Canonical loadings)
<u>Subscribers/single copy readers:</u>				
Get more information on things I've seen such as movies, sports events or accidents (S)	3.30	3.52	3.00	(-.49)
Get immediate knowledge of big news events (S)	3.01	2.87	2.59	(-.36)
Get information to pass on to other people (I)	3.84	3.79	3.54	(-.35)
Get exciting, dramatic, and entertaining news (S)	3.42	3.52	3.05	(-.33)
<u>Non-readers:</u>				
Keep me informed about what is happening in my local community (S)	2.66	2.42	2.63	(.56)
Find products through advertisements (D)	3.24	3.25	3.43	(.42)
By being my friend when I am alone (D)	3.18	2.73	3.12	(.40)
Be happy (D)	3.02	3.10	3.20	(.13)
Percent of respondents:	16.8	9.6	73.6	[N=543]

Canonical correlation = 0.33; chi-square = 14.2 (df = 8); $p < 0.10$

KEY: Magazine motivations from Table 1:

(S) = Surveillance; (D) = Diversion; (I) = Interaction.

Note: Means range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 3: Means of discriminants for consumer magazine readership

	Subscribers (.28)	Single-Copy Readers (.11)	Non- readers (-.47)	(Canonical loadings)
<u>Subscribers/single copy readers:</u>				
Improve the quality of my lifestyle (D)	3.51	3.36	3.06	(.35)
Understand what is going on (I)	3.58	3.55	3.29	(.34)
Find issues affecting people like myself (I)	3.75	3.53	3.33	(.33)
Get information to pass on to other people (I)	3.72	3.78	3.35	(.28)
Be happy (D)	3.29	3.22	2.93	(.26)
Find products through advertisements (D)	3.50	3.51	3.13	(.25)
Just pass the time (D)	3.71	3.77	3.49	(.19)
<u>Non-readers:</u>				
Keep me informed about what is happening in my local community (S)	2.59	2.58	2.67	(-.33)
Get immediate knowledge of big news events (S)	2.66	2.62	2.77	(-.27)
Get more information on things I've seen such as movies, sports events or accidents (S)	3.03	3.29	3.06	(-.26)
Get exciting, dramatic, and entertaining news (S)	3.14	3.23	3.13	(-.24)
By being my friend when I am alone (D)	3.21	3.11	2.91	(-.10)
Percent of respondents:	44.9	23.0	32.1	[N=543]

Canonical correlation = 0.31; chi-square = 72.1 (df = 24); $p < 0.01$

KEY: Magazine motivations from Table 1:

(S) = Surveillance; (D) = Diversion; (I) = Interaction.

Note: Means range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).